THE HEROINES SHOWCASE

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FRANK THORNE and WENDY PINI

THE GREAT RED SONJA INTERVIEW

starring

Frank Thorne and Angelique (Red Sonja) Trouvere,

plus

Marilyn Thorne and a lot of other people in the background

by Margaret O'Connell

My acquaintance with Frank Thorne began when I wrote an LoC to The Comic Reader *defending Red Sonja from their columnist Rona Blabbit's charge that she was just a killer (the letter appeared in* TCR #149, *if anyone is interested). Much to my surprise, within the week I received an odd envelope in the mail. It had Red Sonja on the front, brandishing a tankard of ale. When I opened this intriguing missive, I was stunned to discover that it was a letter from Frank Thorne, the red Sonja artist par excellence, thanking me for coming to her defense.*

As soon as I came out of shock, I wrote back, mentioning the Thanksgiving weekend Creation Con in New York, which was to feature the famed Red Sonja and the Wizard act, with Wendy Pini as Sonja and Frank himself as the Wizard. He wrote back inviting me to come up and say hello after the show. I heard that Steve was planning a special Sonja issue of THS, *and so this interview was born.*

I interviewed Frank on Friday afternoon, shortly after he and Wendy had done their act, posed for about a million pictures taken by camera-happy fans, and been interviewed by Eye-witness News (the local ABC-TV news team) who arrived too late for the show. Our interview took place in the main dealer's room, behind the Thornes' table, where Frank's wife Marilyn, along with several of their children and various other people, were selling Red Sonja records, buttons, T-shirts, posters, and posters of Frank as the Wizard and Frank flanked by two Sonjas in costume.

It was an interesting situation. There I was with my trusty (borrowed) tape recorder, talking to a bearded man in a blue wizard's robe and pointed hat splattered with gold stars and crescent moons, while various kids passing by yelled, "Hey, Mr. Wizard!" and "Why are you wearing a dunce's cap?" or asking for autographs. Before we sere done, Frank had dragged both Wendy Pini and Angelique Trouvere, another of the surrogate Sonjas, into the interview (no, they weren't wearing chain-mail bikinis at the time).

So for Crom's sake read the interview with all due respect, or we may all discover that the sword they use in the show isn't so blunt after all.

THS: Okay, we'll start at the beginning. I just want to ask you a few questions about your previous comics career first.

FRANK: Right.

THS: Okay, according to the article about you in the Sonjacon book, you've been a comic artist for about 29 years now, and you seem to have started out doing mostly syndicated newspaper strips. How did you get involved in the comics field in the first place.

FRANK: The newspaper strips or the books?

THS: Both.

FRANK: Actually I started in the pulp magazines, which were the forerunners of the comic books. They faded as the comic books came in - the comics became illustrated pulp magazines. I am sort of like halfway between a Golden Ager and a Silver Age comic artist.

What had happened was that I was going to art school and I started illustrating for the

pulps just as part of the function of survival. I was putting myself through art school doing freelance work to help pay the bills and I drifted into Standard, old standard, and Joe Archiblad saw my stuff and I started drawing love comics at the tender age of 17. I had a very early start - that was 1947. That gives you an idea how far back I go. I had done the comic books with a great deal of pleasure.

Actually, I had several careers going. I was a professional magician at this time, when I was 18 or 19, with a traveling magic show, and I played in a band, and I had the art work going and somewhere around my 19th or 20th year I had to decide which career I was going to choose.

This all ties in with Sonja, because I sit before you as a wizard.

THS: Right.

FRANK: So I had a sort of a theatrical background and the stage thing, and what Sonja has done is coalesce all of my past experience into this one kind of upthrust of energy. These things, these half-talents I had, helped me to project this thing into what we have now. But then I'm getting ahead of the story.

I chose - Marilyn and I were married, and I'd said that the other careers that I perhaps could have chosen would not be a firm basis for a marriage, so I went into art.

I completed my art school training, which was a three year - just trade school, nuts and bolts art training, and went into King Features with a bunch of Alex Raymond swipes and walked out with a daily and Sunday feature, Perry Mason. I just happened to be there at the right time, and it had little to do with skill, it had a lot to do with timing.

But I was at a very early age doing that, I think I was 20 years old when I started doing a nationally-syndicated strip. It only lasted about a year, and it nearly killed me. The only time I've worked harder is when I'm working now (laughs slightly hysterically) - I've never worked harder in my life (than) on Red Sonja. But those were the early days - it's a man-killing job, doing a daily and Sunday newspaper strip.

THS: Don't you have to keep six weeks ahead all the time?

FRANK: Right, yes, it's all part of that deadline. Comic books are a little easier that way, in that there's some leeway for that. So I moved on - after *Perry Mason* died, I moved out into comic book field again, and did early *Flash Gordons*, and *Jungle Jim*, and *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet*, a lot of those titles. I did a couple of Disney titles - *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea,* and *Moby Dick* for Warner Brothers.

Then I started another daily and Sunday strip, *Dr. Guy Bennett*, which went on for about 6 years. I should've left that long before I did, it dragged on and on. After *Dr. Guy Bennett* died, I went back into comic books again, and here I am again, like Bad Mousie, back in comics.

And I started *Mighty Samson.* Samson was the first character I ever really had a chance to do the cosutme and create from whole cloth, with Otto Binder, God rest his soul. So that was a great pleasure for me, although I only stayed with that book for 7 issues and began to do freelance - I've always done a lot of very straight illustration and commercial work inbetween - it's not that I'm ashamed of comic books.

So that brings us up to the magical moment. Everything else I've told you is pale by comparison, because as Stan put it in *The Superhero Women* book that's just published, in the introduction to the Red Sonja thing, somewhere in the ancient past, Sonja and I were destined for one another.

And I was over at Atlas, doing *Son of Dracula* and covers and whatever and having gone through Red Circle, and bounced back and forth, and Roy called me, Roy Thomas, never met him before, he said, "Frank, I'm Roy Thomas, come in, I want to show you something." I walked in, and there was Sonja. It was never the same after. I fell in love with her on the spot. It is really - Margaret, I'm not kidding.

THS: (laughing) How does Marilyn feel about this?

FRANK: Well, she - she is so sweet. A wonderful woman, I mean by this time we've raised four children and you know, and whatever, and had every blessing in the world, and then Sonja happens.

But there is still something. I can't draw this woman without having some strange feeling. There is a mystical thing. Now whether it's Faustian, whether it's ultimate evil, I can't analyze it, I don't know quite what it is. But I never could draw as fast, it just flows out, I often just well up inside in emotion just drawing the girl - it's just incredible. I just seem to be able to move her very easily through her adventures. And of course she was only supposed to go three issues.

THS: (laughs)

FRANK: That was about it. Of course she went four and five, and of course Marvel fans are great. They're well organized, they're dynamite, and they'd never had a winner, a heroine that did anything at Marvel. And when Sonja started going five and six, and had her own book, and now I'm working on issue #17 -

THS: Issue #17! Number eight just came out!

FRANK: Well, actually you gotta count *Marvel Feature* as seven. And I'm working on book eleven of the regular series. I'm ahead.

THS: Oh, I see.

FRANK: And she's selling very well. We know that she's going to go at least that far. And historically, she sells probably better than Conan, even though she's bi-monthly, but you know, Conan was actually cancelled once.

THS: Oh, it was?

FRANK: Early in the series, yes, for a while, he was doing poorly. So there are issues where Sonja sells better than Conan. And of course Conan didn't take off until about issue #24, actually when Barry Smith left. When Buscema took over, Conan took off. The issue that Red Sonja (first) appeared in was the issue that was the turning point for Conan, and he took off after that. So Sonja is very much an important part of the Conan mythos.

They're very cautious at Marvel, and they don't just go around beginning titles. It just takes time for these decisions to be made. So they had her in a couple of stories, she appeared in four, I think, four stories just as a second banana, and so forth. And they decided, at this point in history that I just described, Roy called me in and they had decided to try a regular color book, not having any idea what would happen.

But the following on the character is incredible. As I say, it's not all Marvel fans, it's not all just fandom - there's a press run of 300 thousand per issue of *Red Sonja*. And you've gotta sell a lot of books. And fandom is what, 10 thousand at the most? So there's just thousands and thousands of books being sold to people who, you know, do answer those LaSalle ads in the back, and just throw the thing away when they're finished. She has a general appeal, it's not just fandom. Fandom, she's got plenty of fans, and they respond to this very strong character, but she's also selling to that great God-knows-who out there. And Marvel doesn't have any money to run a survey, so we don't actually know who's buying it.

I would imagine there are a lot of young men that are ogling Sonja, but they're missing the point, and I say this about them: I used to be a professional magician, and oddly enough, I had a redheaded assistant. She used to walk across and take care of the effects and so forth, and we had one particular number that if things got a little tiring, she'd go empty the water cooler at one side of the stage. It's essentially what we're doing now. Sonja brings them in as the redhaired assistant, but we entertain them with a story, a fantasy story. That's the point of the whole strip.

It seems to be a successful formula. I've never looked back or I've never really closely examined that very controversial character aspect of Sonja, and there are a lot - she's not everybody's cup of tea. I know that.

THS: Especially at first sight.

FRANK: (with mock horror) Yeah, it's **shocking!**

THS: There was this little girl who came into Supersnipe (Comic Art Euphorium in New York City - I was working there last summer) - this little eight-year-old girl was hanging around the store and she pointed at one of the Red Sonja buttons and said, "I don't like her."

FRANK: Yeah?

THS: And I said, "Why not?" And she said, "She's ugly." (Frank snorts.) Well obviously that's not true.

FRANK: Yeah, well it could be frightening...

THS: But there's something frightening about the whole image, that uh -

FRANK: She would be frightening, I imagine she could be frightening to people. I think perhaps she represents to a young woman the aspects of culminating womanhood. I honestly feel that with Sonja, and with Tarzan, with Sleeping Beauty, or Peer Gynt, or any of these great characters, you're dealing with something that Sonja instantly projects to somebody, male or female. It's something working within us. She represents - she throbs that chord within people, a frightening chord. There's violence here, ther's self-assured - she's self-assured, she can handle herself in any situation, she's a free-wheeler like a nighthawk, you know. I think woman fear that and desire to be that way.

THS: Yeah, because they equate that with masculinity, and -

FRANK: Right.

THS: It's the whole cultural thing that if a woman has any aspect of that, then there's something abnormal about her.

FRANK: Exactly. So maybe she's a standard bearer, maybe they share an intimate fantasy with her, in that respect. 'Cause I know she has - it's not all male fans, there's no doubt about it, because some of the best mail - you know, when I read that letter from you - I went right downstairs, and I said to the whole family, and I had a copy made of it -

THS: Oh my God!

FRANK: And I said, "This girl understands," because mentioning Bettelheim, and the whole, that book, *The Uses of Enchantment* - Well, our daughter, Wendy, is interested in writing, she was just into that, and she - So, anyway, you showed a depth of understanding. I said, "Well, this is somebody who hasn't just totally discounted her, you have a female who's tried to understand and perhaps even be involved." So that's why I immediately sent you a Sonja button. (Laughs)

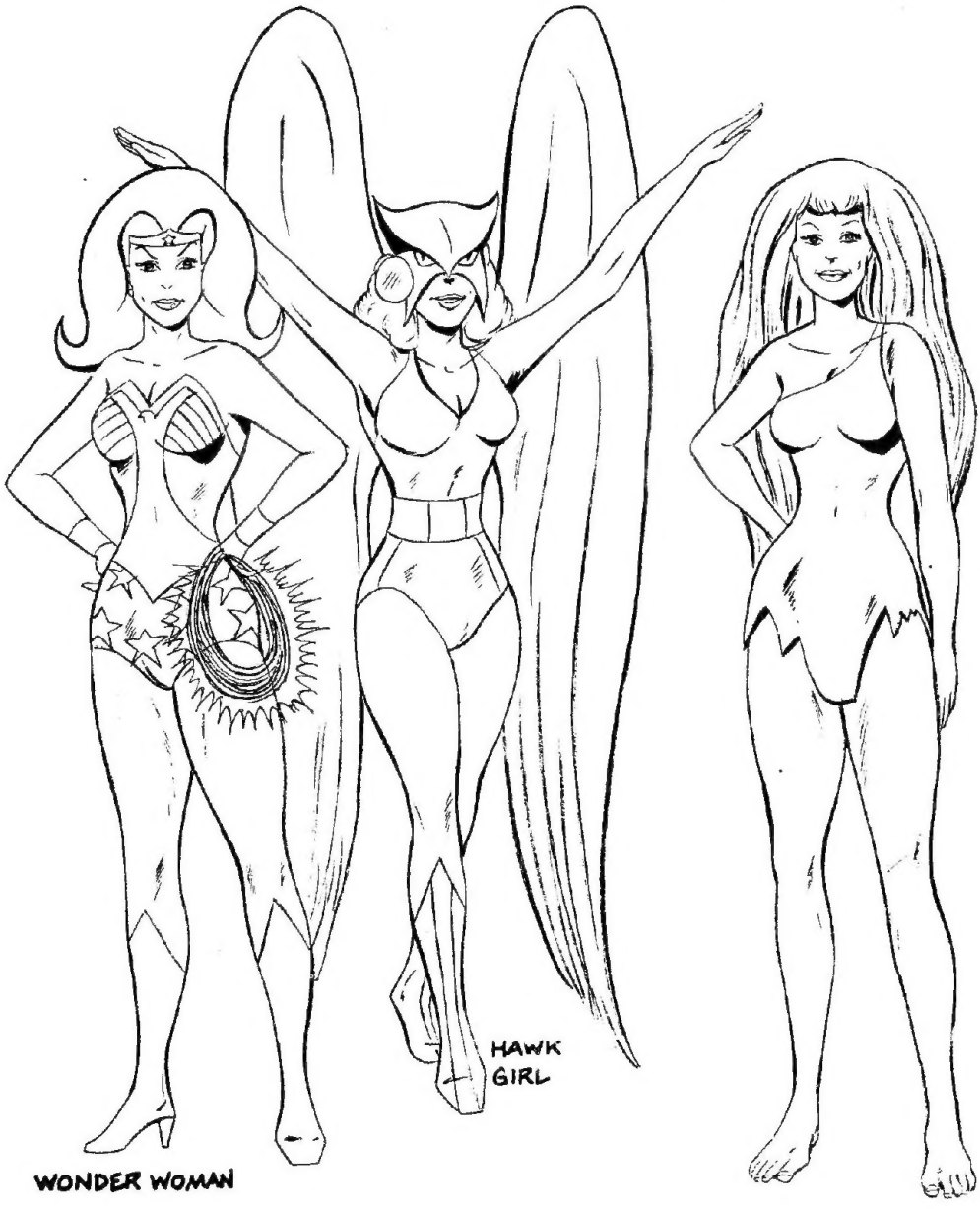
But you're not alone, there are many - Angelique (Trouvere) is one of our Sonja lookalikes here, and she understands, and she dresses as Sonja, and we have six girls, and we could have sixty, I think - it's one of those things, we keep it to six because it becomes unwieldly otherwise. But I think there's a deep response in people to the character. Some lament that the costume is too explicit, but I ask you, would she have gone as far as she has if the costume were more extensive? Good question.

And here our interview must be interrupted for lack of space. But don't worry - we'll have more in the next issue of The Heroines Showcase, *our special Red Sonja issue! - SRJ*

Margaret O'Connell, 19 Stuyvesant Oval, New York, NY 10009

(Photograph on page 4 by Richard Pini)

SUPERHEROINES OF THE ALL-NEW SUPERFRIENDS HOUR



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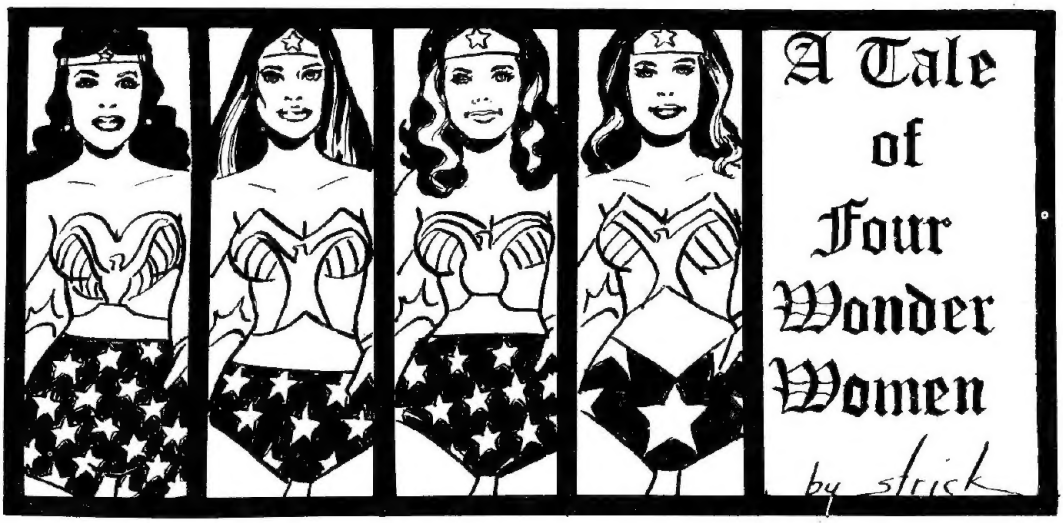

This article could easily be subtitled: "How I Quit Writing Hate Letters and Learned to Love the New, Original Wonder Woman." You must understand: I am a stickler for continuity. What is currently running in *Wonder Woman* and *World's Finest* has nearly nothing whatsoever to do with any established situation at DC.

I admit that until this morning, I detested what DC was doing to the Wonder Woman mythos. Starting with issue #228 of her magazine, Pricess Diana of Earth-1 (WW-1) met and relinquished her comic to the Wonder Woman of Earth-2 (WW-2) who lived during the time of the second World War. This Earth-2 WW was not the heroine I and others readers expected.

As most comic fans know, Earth-2 is the place where the Golden Age super heroes are assigned. Those heroes, about who Earth-0 people (that's us) read during WW II, battled Nazis on a world parallel to the one which saw the start of the Justice League of America.

Time flows more slowly on Earth-2; thus, the heroes of WW II there are still able to fight crime today (although most are retiring) as members of the Justice Society. For example, Black Canary started her career on Earth-2 during the war, when she was around eighteen. With a normal flow of time, she should be somewhere in her early fifties. Yet though she's switched Earths, she still does not seem to be more than forty (and probably a lot less).

It is to this Earth that much early DC comic book history is assigned. The modern, Earth-1 Batman has little in common with his earlier self, so the logical assumption is that our Batman has an Earth-2 double, who has had adventures that ours has not, the adventures chronicled in early issues.

With this in mind, most comic fans assigned the early Moulton/Peters Wonder Woman to Earth-2. Indeed, in *Justice League* #135, Wonder Woman-2 battled Queen Clea of Atlantis, the same character that the Golden Age WW battled in *Comic Cavalcade* #18, *Sensation* #36, and *Wonder Woman* #8 & #28.

But today's Earth-2 Wonder Woman is . . . different.

The early Wonder Woman's boyfriend, Steve Trevor, had blonde hair; now his is shown as a brownette. Etta Candy was a wrestler who eventurally went to a controversial college; Etta-2 is General Blankenship's secretary. Hippolyte was a brunette; Hippolyte-2 is blonde. WW used to change clothes normally (if a little fast); WW-2 does a pirouette and - - instant costume! Diana Price started her career as a lieutenant; Diana-2 is a yeoman. In other words, the entire Earth-2 situation closely follows that of the Wonder Woman TV series.

DC would have us accept this strange Wonder Woman as the real, Earth-2, mccoy. If we do, then the **original**, Moulton Peters Wonder Woman **must not** have been on Earth-2. The only

explanation I can think of, Bridwell help me, is that she was from yet **another** Earth. Would you believe an Earth-2a?

Having finally figured this out, my doubts as to the legitimacy of WW-2 are clearing up - - except for one factor. The book itself must somehow come out and state that the Golden Age WW was not on Earth-2. Lord knows it took an eternity for *World's Finest* to admit that the late, unlamented, Super Sons series was imaginary. Should it take *Wonder Woman* that long to explain its continuity?

The idea of three Wonder Women makes separation of the WW series fairly simple. The Wonder Woman of Earth-2a started things off, lasting in the comic books until the introduction of the Wonder Family (yay!), which began the adventures of WW-1. Since issue #228, WW-2 during WW II has been shown; she was also the one involved with the Justice Society in their original adventures. The occassional series of re-done reprints are exactly that, except for the most recent series, which might have been fed to Diana as a "mental stabilizer" in the form of mostly irrational dreams, which amazingly reflected the real adventures of WW-2a!

So there are three Wonder Women. Are there more? This is practically a certainty.

If WW the magazine is the same as the TV show, then there should be a wacky, naive Amazon princess named Drusilla running around Paradise Island during the war. (WW-1 knows an Amazon named Drusilla, but she is the royal messenger, not a princess.) And since WW-2 bears a remarkable resemblance to WW-2a, it is probably that like her, WW-2 gave up her immortality to journey to Man's World. Thus, even with Earth-2's slower time in operation, it is still a long while for a Wonder Woman to work from WW II to the present.

(WW-1 doesn't have to worry about aging; it seems that she's been allowed to keep her immortality. Just think: If she was twenty when she first came to Man's World, and found Wonder Girl immediately . . . And if Wonder Girl were one year old then, and eighteen now (this is all approximate, mind you), that would make Wonder Woman **at least** 37 years old, while she looks ten years younger.)

(You'll notice that with this handy-dandy reckoning, WW found Stevie and started her career during the Cold War, not WW II. Wonder Woman was fighting crime as a woman when Superman was still a boy.)

Wonder Woman of Earth-2 is definitely middle-aged by now, not at her fighting peak, yet in JSA adventures she looks young and vigorous. Is this Princess Diana? Impossible!

Diana must have returned to Paradise Island (if she wasn't killed first) and her sister Dru, who had remained young, took her place, much as the Spirit of '76, and later the Patriot, replaced Captain America when he "died".

Now, I'm not saying Dru should take over as Wonder Woman now; too many Earth-2 heroes have been doing that lately: Power Girl, Robin, and (soon) the Huntress. Dru's replacement has already taken place - - maybe within the last five years.

Go back and check me; in any of the JSA/JLA team-ups is Wonder Woman ever referred to as "Diana"?

Make sense? I'm satisfied with my explanation of all four Wonder Women. But what excuse is DC giving us for messing up their continuity?

CLUB NEWS by Ted Delorme

It seems like only last issue that I was enthusiastically announcing the beginning of my long and wondrous career as editor of the CHFC publications line (it was last issue). And yet it seems like a long time ago (it was a long time ago). Now, here's another hot flash for ya.

I quit.

I suppose I owe you all an apology. A promise was made, and now that promise is being broken. It's taken some time for everyone to adjust to new policies, personalities, addresses, and schedules, but we all did. It would have, should have worked, despite all the changes, except for one factor. I was changing too. Changing from a menial 9 to 5 job to a much more demanding 7 to 7 position of authority. Developing as a person and an artist. Drifting away from a comicfan's life into other, equally bizarre, equally thrilling interests. To put it simply, I lost that most important spark of enthusiasm which was necessary to keep this fanzine rolling along.

Rather than remain a stumbling block in the path of a venture which I still admire greatly, I have chosen to step down as editor. This decision was an extremely difficult one to make, but I feel I have acted wisely. This is my last issue.

It is great commendation to Steve Johnson, our publisher, that my pragmatism has not totally strangled production. He has been the driving force behind the club since Al Tanner's departure, and I feel sure that he shall remain so in collaboration with his new editor. He has always been more than understanding about my constant delays, ever eager to do practically anything to keep things moving. This fanzine will survive. And prosper. As long as people like Steve care.

Aw, don't worry, folks! It ain't so bad. Like Melissa Manchester says, "I must be Fantasy's best friend; I'm a sucker for happy endings, and I do believe in new beginnings." This isn't my farewell address, this is more my chance to do some things I've been wanting to do for a year or more. We're all going forward, upward, and ever-onward!

The rest of our staff has been branching out, too! Carol Strickland, who kept telling me to call her Strick, but I never did, but anyway, Strick (hey, I did it!) and I met at this summer's Chefacon, and she tells me that she'll soon be publishing a fanzine of her own under the title *"Hola!"*. We'll be watching for it, Strick!

The long-awaited, much-heralded, complete-in-one-volume, everything-you-always-wanted-to-know-about, Heroine Directory is still in production. It will be the definitive list of (almost) every female character to play even a remotely important role in comic books. Sorry, but extending that to cover strips, prose, TV, and movies would be going a bit overboard. . .

To be perfectly serious for a moment, I'd like to make a statement regarding our editorial policy.

We are in this for fun; the money is strictly secondary (although it is kinda nice to show a profit!). We are not like the countless other magazines which will stoop to any level to make a few extra bucks, move a few extra copies. A case in point being the so-called "Farrah-fad" which has evidenced itself on the cover of everything from *The Irrational Inquisitor* ("Farrah forgets to comb hair . . . Lee storms out!"), to *Business Week* ("Farrah made more on her lunch hour than you made last year!"). Well, just let me proudly state here and now that *The Heroines Showcase* is in a class far above such cheap commercial exploitation! You'll never see this Fawcett-person on our cover, nor anywhere withing our pages! I guess that lets you know where we're coming from!

Uh, well, time's almost up, folks, and I gotta go, so, for the last time, hey gang, thanks for listening, and have a happy Groundhogs day . . .

Ted Delorme

WHO IS -- BLACK ORCHID?

by Carol A. Strickland

There's a lot of idle talk going around about just who the Black Orchid is. For you uninitiated, she appeared in *Adventure* #428-430 and *Phantom Stranger* #31,32,35,36,38-41. "No one knows who she is . . . or how it is that she possesses the strength of a regiment . . . the flying power of a hawk . . . and the tender compassion of a young girl . . ." She wasn't much character-wise, but oh, the characters she assumed!

So who was she? I've heard guesses ranging from the pre-JSA Power Girl to the off-spring of two Legionnaires. I figure it's time I tossed my own guess into the ring. It may or mat not be right, but here goes, anyway: Black Orchid is Lucy Lane!

Lucy and Julie Spence were the only good characters in the *Lois Lane* strip for all the Rose and Thorn years, the years in which I never missed an issue of *LL*. Lucy was becoming quite a character: rebellious and . . . a criminal! Wow! Yes, Lucy was deeply involved with the 100, but one day she ran from them, became sick with some sort of jungle fever, and had a witch doctor transform her into an old lady, a side-effect of the cure.

Shortly after Lucy's return to Metropolis, months before anyone else found out who Lena Lawrence, her old-woman identity, was, Superman discovered Lucy.

What would you have done in his place?

First you would have found a cure for her, a quick one. Keeping in mind that Superman has a stock of super-potions, and that anyone who is even remotely connected with him **must** at some time receive super powers, you would have taken a vial from your super-medicine cabinet and given it to Lucy. The potion took effect, and Lucy's invulnerable body threw off the aging syndrome (with only the side effect of keeping her silver-gray hair - - oh, these unperfected serums!).

With Lucy back to normal, except for her powers, she turned herself over to the law for punishment for her criminal activities. (Black Orchid said that she had spent time in jail.) Superman, however, would persuade a judge to release her, with the stipulation that she use her temporary super powers to track down people she had known of as being connected with the 100.

Thus was the origin of the Black Orchid. Lucy made sure that Black Orchid's exploits were on record before she arranged an "accident" which allowed her to regain her youth. This event was also well-documented; according to the public press, there was now no way Lucy Lane could be Black Orchid. (This explains why the Black Orchid debuted three months before Lucy's "accident". Comic time, this could have been as little as a week's difference.)

Lucy had already shown skill at disguise; as a super-person she was an expert. But what happens to the Orchid when the serum wears off? In *Phantom Stranger* #41, Black Orchid tells Ronne Kuhn, "When I decide to **retire**, believe me, I'm going to let **you** take my place!" Which Ronne can do easily, using the equipment from the Black Orchid Legion. But until then - - Lucy Lane is the Black Orchid!

NO, I DON'T GET MY POWERS FROM CIRCUITRY CONCEALED IN MY COSTUME...
Greenleaf

MISS VICTORY

"The Showgirl Scheme"* - *6pgs.*

Captain Aero #25 - *Feb. 1946*

Golden Age Girls

by Steve Johnson

"Life hangs by the merest thread of circumstance when, contrary to her custom in time of danger, Miss Victory becomes the demure Joan Wayne, and delves into a crime that threatens to ruin her good name and promises her only an ignominious grave in the ocean's briny depths."

The afternoon is growing late as Miss Victory noses her plane downward to a landing in the marshes outside the summer resort of Oceanside. Disembarking, she uses the remote control on her multi-purpose belt to send the plane back to its hanger, and then changes into her civilian clothes.

Walking into Oceanside, she registers at the hotel and inquires if her father has checked in. He immediately walks in the door and Joan throws a public tantrum claiming that she had been forced to wait hours for him to arrive. After upending furniture and breaking a window, she is carted off to her room.

That evening Joan is approached by the gentleman for whose benefit the earlier outburst had been staged. Mr. Cable suggests that the outburst showed an underlying talent and arranges for her to have a private reading the following day by Grapho, The Graphologist.

Grapho tells her of her hidden talent for show business, and urges her to use any means to secure $10,000 to invest in her career. Joan forges a check on her father's account and turns over the cash to Grapho.

Joan and a number of other girls board a private plane, and are flown to their first engagement, where they perform as chorus girls at a sleezy dive. Joan protests the conditions and receives a good clout for her objections.

Later, the intimidated girls re-board the plane, and take off for their next destination. When Mr. Cable suggests that everyone relax, Joan timidly offers to do her specialty act of impersonating Miss Victory. Of course Joan's specialty is making herself **really** Miss Victory! Reappearing as Miss Victory, she announces that her plane, filled with police, are being directed to their location by her multi-purpose belt.

Forced to drastic measures, Cable and Grapho threaten to drop Miss Victory and the girls out the bomb bay doors of the converted bomber and into the ocean below. Miss Victory subdues Grapho in the ensuing scuffle and manuvers Cable into taking the long plunge into the ocean. A deftly pointed gun convinces the pilot where to land the plane.

Costume: Blue blouse; red cape, shorts, gloves & boots; white belt & mask
Hair: Blonde

And then wrapping things up the next day, Joan receives a handshake of thanks from FBI Special Agent John Decker (who had played the part of her father) for helping catch the gang of crooks.

The plot of this story seems a little contrived, but considering the time period, perhaps it was more viable.

The artwork in this issue (and during the three years preceeding it) was guided by Nina Albright. Her style flowed nicely with the story line, and she had the ability to draw complete figures in small panels (an ability lacking in many current artists), and so providing plenty of nice action shots of Miss Victory.

Miss Victory's next and final appearance (Captain Aero #26) was delayed 3 months on its then quarterly schedule until Aug. 1946. It hit the stands the same time as Catman #32, and denoted Holyoke's departure from publishing super-hero comics and its forthcoming demise.

The artwork in this final adventure ("The Crime Wave"*) was not handled by Nina Albright. Miss Victory's backless, "V" blouse (slit to the waist) was traded in for a more conservative, short sleeve blouse with a modes V-neck accented with a small white "V", though it was not as conservative as her earliest costume (drawn by Charles M. Quinlan) which left only her legs, from knees to thighs uncovered.

Captain Aero is not one of the more collected comic titles, so many of Miss Victory's appearances in the book are very inexpensive (as low as $2.00 in Good Condition). So it would make a great way to start your own *Golden Age Girls* collection if you start with Miss Victory.

****

"Pretty Joan Wayne, the timid little steno of Capital Hill" appeared in:

Captain Aero #6-17,21-26 (June 1942 - Aug. 1946) (#18-20 do not exist)

Captain Fearless #1,2 (Aug., Sep. 1941)

Holyoke One Shot #1,3,5 (1944, 1945)
cover app. #3; rpts.

Miss Victory #1,2 (1945)
cover app. #1,2

Veri Best Sure Fire Comics #1 (1945)
rpts.

Veri Best Sure Shot Comics #11 (1945)
rpts.

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Steven R. Johnson, P.O. Box 1329, Campbell, CA 95008

RANGERS
COMICS
JUNE
NO 17
10c

DRUMBEATS AT MIDNIGHT

The Jungle Heroine Debate

JEFF THOMPSON/TED DELORME

Jungle heroines? I love them! Airplanes and automobiles take a back seat to those furious and fiery flora-and-fauna furies as the ultimate transporting device. The jungle-based comic books, in my opinion, leave the supernatural, Sword & Sworcery, and yes, even the super-hero magazines far behind in regards to their providing their readers with the most escapism.

The menacing, murky, malarial jungles of Africa surely are the locations for the highest adventure and danger. While plodding through the dense jungle one is in constant peril; behind which boulder or gnarled tree are the next lethal creatures or hostile natives lurking? With the jungle heroine the reader is hurled into the thickest tropical brush imaginable and cannot help but thrill to the endless stream of death-traps and "impossible" odds delivered to Sheena, Nyoka, or Shanna for ten-to-twenty pages each and every month.

Sure, super-heroes provide escapism, but jungle heroines go them one better. Superman flies around Metropolis, which is a concrete and precise place wherein every building, street, and storeroom is labelled. Where are Metropolis' dank caves, concealed booby traps, quicksand pools, and perilous thickets located? The answer is simple - they aren't. Only with Sheena, et al, is the reader presented with a setting - the unexplored jungles of the "unexplored" Dark Continent - which is so indefinite and (hopefully) unpredictable that it is a thrill-a-minute.

What heroine addict does not yearn occasionally to shirk his or her "civilized" surroundings, problems, and clothes and enjoy the true freedom and uninhibited self-confidence which is the jungle heroine's?

How did it all begin? The theme of the jungle character - total freedom from everyone and everything and an invigorating adventure around every palm leaf - has been evident in human beings since there were such organisms, but the precedent-setting comics character - the Wonder Woman of the grapevines, Sheena, Queen of the Jungle - emerged from (and flourished for well over a decade in) the pages of Fiction House's *Jumbo Comics*, an oversized, experimental comic book which was born in mid-1938. *Jumbo Comics* carried its swinging saper-star, the extremely sexy Sheena, through 167 popular issues - throughout the entire 1940's decade and into the fourth year of the next (1953). In addition to this considerable record, a Fiction House (Real Adventure Publishing Company) magazine entitled *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle*, debuted in Spring 1942, and a Sheena television program starring the luscious Irish McCalla followed less than a decade later. (See: "The Reel-Live Heroine" by Tom O'Reilly, in *The Heroine Addict* #4,5.) And now, twenty-three years after *Jumbo Comics* #167, Sheena has lived on through such channels as *The Heroine Addict; It Ain't Me, Babe*, a feminist underground comic book; and the possibility of a feature-length, live action Sheena motion picture starring a "Sheena" of the cinema, Racquel Welch.

Just as the success of Tarzan (and Jane!) in the newspaper and in the comics spawned such lesser lights as Ka-Zar, Ka'anga, and Wambi, so did Sheena have her imitators. Although none of them were the "original" jungle heroine in comics and pulps (but who is to say definitely who was the first in any comic-book genre? Weren't Doc Savage, The Shadow, The Crimson Avenger, and The Sandman the "supermen" of the 30's?), such characters as Princess Pantha, Jann of the Jungle, and Nyoka, the Jungle Girl (who was based very loosely on Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan novel, *Jungle Girl*), provided more than average excitement. As supple and gracile women romping freely and enviably along uncharted landscapes, how could they lose? (In 1940 there was even a female Tarzan introduced into the Ape Man's newspaper strip! Her

name was Tarzeela, although it soon was shortened to Zeela!)

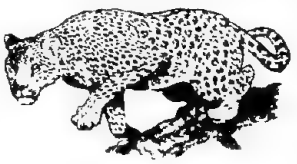
Unfortunately, no jungle comic book lasts forever because the uncivilized, non-mechanized jungle slightly narrows the scope of acceptable situations which are able to occur therein. Despite how much potential and personal appeal such foliage females as Sheena and Nyoka commanded (Nyoka enjoyed a long stint in Fawcett's *Master Comics* and then 77 issues of her own title), they eventually swung into oblivion because their writers had exhausted their imaginations where white exploiters, headhunters, and boa constrictors prowling through the brush were concerned. Regrettably, the uncharted, unexplored African terrain finally reached a point when it all had been explored one time too many.

SHEENA

By that generation of comic-readers, at least. Bringing the jungle genre up to the present time, one should note that such characters as Tarzan, Korak, Ka-Zar, and the Black Panther are holding a fair-to-good number of readers, and that the early 1970's saw two jungle heroines in their own magazines - Shanna, the She-Devil (#1-5 in 1972 and 1973, and close to a dozen guest appearances to date), and Rima, the Jungle Girl (#1 7, 1974-1975). In concept and theory, this duo of dashing damsels was a success; in reality, their careers were nipped in the buds by inadequate writers. As talented as Carole Seuling and the peerless Steve Gerber are, they insisted on polluting Shanna's jungle with super-heroic gadgetry and adversaries in #2, 4,5 of *Shanna, The She-Devil*, leaving only #1 and 3 for true, jungle-type adventures. The Shanna story in #1 by Seuling-Gerber was an exciting one presented in the savage, sexy, and swiftly-moving style of Sheena and #3 offered us an interesting, Tarzan-like "lost civilization" tale, but the other three Shanna stories were fouled up by such characters as Professor X, S.H.I.E.L.D. agents, villainous freaks, and a heroin kingpin. They had no place in a comic book about an impassioned, nature-minded, veterinarian-turned jungle queen and her ferocious feline pets, Ina and Biri.

As for DC's seven-issue *Rima, The Jungle Girl*, magazine, the initial quartet of issues was highly entertaining, as it was merely an adaption of William Henry Hudson's classic novel, *Green Mansions*, from which the characters of Rima, Abel, and Nuflo spring. Then, with issue #5, Rima's writer, the notorious Robert Kanigher (see: "Robert Kanigher, Maker and Breaker of Heroines" by Scott Gibson, in *The Heroine Addict* #5), mishandled her and co-featured her in South American dictator performing cryonics experiments on the natives and an incorrigible young boy from the "civilized world" who would be out of place in *Rima, The Jungle Girl*, or anywhere else except the corner.

In addition to this, Rima was not a true jungle heroine *a la* Sheena. Rima rarely engaged in the kind of physical combat which was Sheena's forte; she merely summoned jungle animals "telepathically" to do her dirty work for her. I say leave that to Aquaman! After thrilling to the non-super-powered Sheena, Queen of the Jungle, Rima looked to many people like the Catwoman and the other villainesses on ABC-TV's "Batman" who left the fighting to the men and got



SHANNA

under a table. That's not all - Rima was not located in Africa, but South America (the setting of *Green Mansions* as well), and her backup features of the Space Voyagers in issues #1-5, an *Unexpected*-ish horror tale in #6, and Space Marshall in #7 did anything but help the whole book retain a "jungle feel".

The jungle genre in comic books is enduring a trying period in its evolution currently. The ultimate escapism previously provided by Tarzan and Sheena now is being found by many fans (myself exluded) in the new comic field of barbarism. Conan, Kull, Red Sonja, Claw, and Starfire are thriving while the Superman of the vine-swingers, Tarzan of the Apes, is the only jungle character who is really and truly keeping his head above water - if even he is. For the moment, the domains of monsters and mages has usurped the place and effect of those lush junlges of yesterday. But, junlge fans, hang in there! Hopefully other fans' comic tastes will swing full circle and Tarzan, Shanna, Korak, and possibly Rima will return to their previous and still-deserved positions of popularity. Hear me, you so-called heroes in barbaric armour and chain mail-loinclothes and bikinis of fur never rust!
- Jeff Thompson

But on the other hand, chain mail doesn't jungle rot (heh-heh heh) . . .

But seriously, folks, what good are jungle heroines? In preference over another reprint title of "Sgt. Nasty and his Screaming Bazookas", okay, but they could never replace the union suit gang in any aspect! Not one!

Certainly not intelligence. The great majority of jungle heroines are undeniably on an IQ level with the trees they swing from. Which is fine, because the plots never really required any high-powered brainwork. Just stand there and look pretty, sell a few issues to the drooling adolescent. Then comes "get-tied-up, escape, feed the bad guys to the fill-in-the-vicious animal, and head on home to the cave."

RIMA

Speaking of the bad guys, jungle heroines are helping in the struggle to conserve by recycling them. You know, always the same old surely, invariably ugly, mustache-twirling, need-a-shave gang. Many wear black hats. It's part of the image . . .

But make no mistake, those meanies are very important! Why, without them, who would rope the heroine to some vaguely phallic symbol while making coy pseudo-sexual remarks? No one is ever raped in these stories, you understand. But that's the whole point. The jungle heroine is an ancient sexuál-fantasy stereotype, the wild, unattainable bitch in heat. I, foi one, have outgrown her.

Obviously, others have outgrown her also. Jungle heroines are really hurting for sales. Both Shanna and Rima folded quickly. Kazar was canned after a guest-shot featuring Shanna. Tarzan is no top-rank seller, and even the black & white *Savage Tales* got the axe when it shifted to jungles instead of high walled cities. We don't really need this stigma of no-profit attached to other heroines, peo-ple! Joe Kubert had a strip des-cribed as "a female Blackhawks" but it was shelved when the o-riginal Blackhawks struck out recently. Like father, like daugh-ter.

Let's examine a jungle hero-ine closely, shall we? We'll

choose the one most of you still have fresh in your memory, Shanna, the She-Devil. She hates all men (because all men are evil slimy things, of course), yet she enters the jungle in search of her father, and her first move is to pick up a rather ludicrous boyfriend/sidekick. She loves all animals (except men, even though "all men are animals"), but when her cat dies, she skins it and half-wears it for the remainder of her book's mercifully short run. Terribly non-violent too, although she has no compunctions about commanding her twin leopards, Fred & Barney or somesuch, form shredding anyone who annoys her royal self. Shanna doesn't even have the guts to stand her ground. When reality got too heavy for her, instead of fighting back, she retreated into her little egocentric fantasy world, and who cares about the rest of you!

Remember the Bozo's from *Defenders*? They weren't the first ones Steve Gerber came up with . . . Shanna is a basket case. I didn't like her much, incidentally . . .

Generalizations are generally pretty poor ideas in a formal debate, but this has got to be the ultimate in anti-formal, so let's just say that if you've seen one jungle heroine, you've been so unfortunate as to have seen them all. **- Ted Delorme**

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THE HEROINE REVUE

Jet Dream and her Stunt Girl Counterspies

by Scott Gibson

In the mid-sixties, super-spies and undercover agents were all the rage, boosted to prominence via the phenomenal success of James Bond. And comic books, always ready to latch onto a good thing, accomodated spy-hungry fans by producing a bumper crop of espionage titles. One of the many Bond spin-offs was the television series *The Man From Uncle*, which subsequently was adapted into comic book form courtesy of Gold Key (Western Publishing). And from this magazine came another spy-type series. One called *Jet Dream and her Stunt Girl Counter-Spies*.

Readers first viewed Jet Dream in *Man From U.N.C.L.E.* #7 (July 1966) as she was roaring down a country road in her little red sports car. Hot in pursuit and showering her with bullets was a car loaded with enemy spies. Fortunately, Jet's Stunt Girl Brigade arrived just in time to save their raven-haired leader. The remainder of this four-page story was spent in giving a bit of background information about Ms. Dream and her "girl-wonders". It seemed as though they were all Hollywood stunt women "before the big time espionage bug bit them" as Jet termed it. At that time, they formed a sort of free-lance spy agency. Although the U.S. Government had offered them all official status with The CIC (Counter-Intelligence Corps), they disdained becoming entangled in government red tape, and struck out on their own. Besides Jet, the stunt girls included Marlene (from Germany), Tonda (from France) and another American named (oh, my!) Cookie Jarr.

In her second adventure, "The Spider & The Spy", Jet infiltrated a group of enemy agents to learn the whereabouts of a kidnapped American spy. The info she gathered there sent her (and her "Petticoat Brigade") deep into Red China where they boarded and took over a fishing junket on which the agent was being held. With remarkably little effort, they freed him and sailed the boat all the way to Hong Kong.

"The Super-Tiger of Targan!" in #9 pitted the women against a robot tiger. If nothing else, the adventure did record the fact that Jet Dream and her team were mercenaries, as they accepted emeralds as a reward for destroying the tiger.

U.N.C.L.E. #10's "Ting-A-Ling Enemy Agent" introduced another femme fatale; a lovely South Sea Islander named Ting-A-Ling who proved to be nearly a match for Jet in hand-to-hand combat. The Stunt Gals were attempting to recover diamonds stolen by a criminal named Kong, and they soon discovered that the crook was holding Ting's grandfather prisoner, forcing her to do battle with the women counter-spies. Armed with this knowledge, Jet and the others aided Ting in rescuing the old man and defeating Kong. Impressed with Ting-A-Ling's fighting skills, Jet invited the Polynesian girl to join her crew. Ting accepted.

Jet's next case, "Death Plunge", in #11 was a thor-

oughly confusing caper. As nearly as I can determine, the pages were printed in the wrong order; only page one was where it belonged. From there, if you skip to page 4, then read page 3 and finish up with page 2, the tale makes substantially more sense. It is concerned with The Stunt Women helping out an old friend — a movie director — by doing a high-wire stunt for his latest film. But the director turned out to be an enemy agent in disguise. His real plan is to kill Jet and the others. Naturally, however, the women escape his deathtrap at the last moment and capture not only the director, but a whole slew of his cohorts, as well.

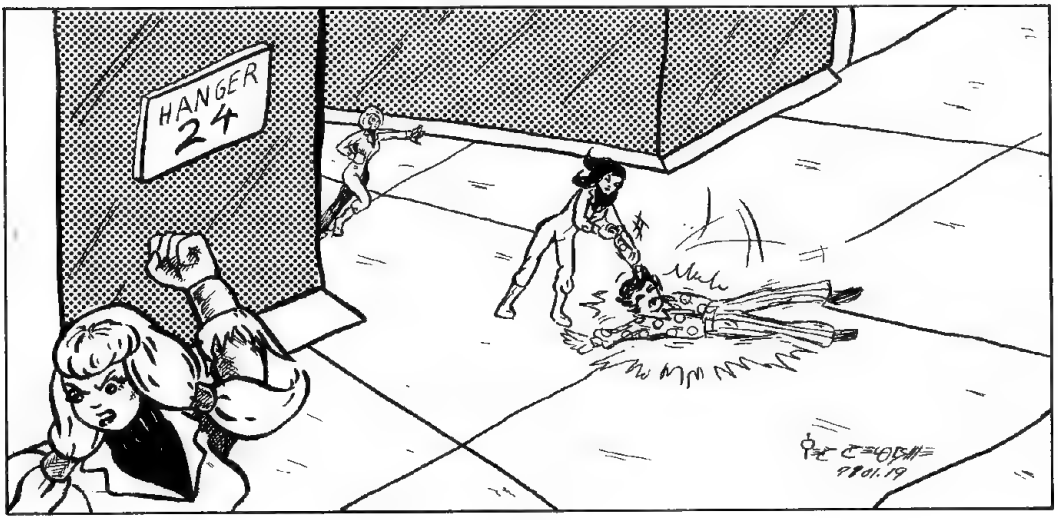
A beautious flame-haired spy named Raven Red soared onto the scene in "The Powder Puff Derby Caper" (U.N.C.L.E. #12). Jet was taking part in a jet-air race when her plane was shot down over a small island in the Pacific. Landing, she soon learned that she was a sitting duck for a bevy of lethal ladies, Raven Red's own evil brigade. It was, in fact, Raven who shot Jet down. Utilizing skills she remembered from an old jungle picture she had worked on, Ms. Dream quickly turned the tables on her captors, bagging RR and her minions and turning them over to the authorities. As Raven was being led away, however, she snarled "No one can cage Red Raven! I'll escape to flame you out for keeps, Jet!"

#13's "The Achilles Heel" had the Stunt Girls rescuing a C.I.A. agent whose plane had crashed. Unfortunately, he turned out to be a phony, who attempted to lead the heroines into a deathtrap. Needless to say, he failed. #14 saw Jet and Ting-A-Ling returning to Ting's tropical island home only to discover that yet another hive of spies had nested there. This time it was Ting-A-Ling's parents who were menaced, but the situation was put to rights in only four pages.

The little French stuntwoman Tonda abruptly disappeared from the series around this time. She was replaced in #13 by another of her countrywomen, this one named Petite. Additionally, Cookie Jarr was seen in #12, but did not reappear until #18!

"Day of Infamy" (#16) spotlighted Marlene, as a couple of crooks caused little "accidents" around Stunt Girl Headquarters. The accidents were designed to throw blame on Marlene and cause dissension among the heroines. It didn't take Jet Dream long to see through the scheme, though, and she and the others rousted the real culprits. Marlene also held the spotlight in next issue's "Farmer Brown Fiasco", as she and Jet followed a trail of mysterious radio signals. It led them smack into the middle of a conspiracy to assassinate the President. The conspiracy was quickly quoshed. U.N.C.L.E. #18's "The Capture of Jet" had The Stunt Gal Crew rescuing their leader who had been abducted by a couple of armored truck robbers.

The trend of featuring more and more of Jet's supporting characters (particularly Marlene!) continued, as The German member of the team faced a hotbed of Nazis who were out to gain revenge against her father who had vigorously campaigned against Hitler during WW2. Marlene's resources and enviable arsenal of weapons were brought into play in what amounted to a solo



adventure for her in #19's "Fall To Freedom".

Before U.N.C.L.E. #20 hit the stands, *Jet Dream and Her Stunt Girl Counter-Spies* bowed in the pages of their very own magazine, in what was to be their only novel-length adventure. And a doozy it was, full of intrigue and derring-do. Titled "D-Day For The Generalissimo", the 26 page tale related the escapades of Ting-A-Ling, Petite, Marlene, Cookie Jarr (now with blonde hair and a Swedish accent) and of course Jet, as Femmes Fivesome escorted a banished ruler of a South American country back to his homeland amidst the many attempts of an evil organization know as Cipher to murder the ruler, thereby keeping the country in the hands of tyrants. In addition, the story featured a full-page diagram of Stunt-Girl Headquarters (similar in some ways to Batman's Bat-Cave). The headquarters was now being called No Man's Land.

The book was just a one-shot, so The Cute Counterspies were thereafter returned to the ignominy of the four page back-up slot in *Man From U.N.C.L.E.* And even that wouldn't last for too much longer. #20 saw the return of wicked Raven Red who lured Jet Dream into yet another trap: this one a cage of birds calculated to peck their victim to death. But loyal Petite arrived on the scene in time to kayo both Raven and her birds

With #21, the Man From U.N.C.L.E. stories were but reprints of earlier exploits, and Jet's four page feature presented original material. "The Terrors of Ting-A-Ling" had a jealous boyfriend of Ting's trailing her to No Man's Land to learn just what sort of secret life she concealed. Discovered, the young man was attacked and shot before Ting-A-Ling recognized him. Fortunately, he was not injured seriously and was treated and released. Ting was cautioned not to "let any more stray dogs follow (her) home."

The final Jet Dream story, #22's "Demon Dogfight" had a group of spies sabotaging a mock air battle between The Stunt Girls and The Air Force. Once again, however, Petite saved the day by engaging in a real dogfight with the enemy spy plane, sending it to a fiery crash. When last seen, Jet and her girls were dancing with some of The Air Force pilots at a victory celebration later that evening. Date of this last adventure was April 1969.

The Jet Dream strip was what every comic series aspires to – pure and total escapism, no more, or less. An amazing amount of entertainment was packed into eleven 4-page stories. The writing, necessarily cramped, was sometimes good, often quite poor. Jet and her cohorts engaged in a great deal of flippant dialogue, liberally sprinkled with obscure slang, making some stories a little difficult to understand, others downright ludicrous. Yet the series never aspired to more than back-up feature status, and in that respect, the writers nearly always succeeded and frequently surpassed their goals. Jet Dream was sometimes better than The Man From U.N.C.L.E. Art ranged from quite good to little more than crayon sketchings. Mike Sekowsky illustrated #7-10 and 13; Jack Sparling filled in on #11; and Joe Certa did all other stories, including the one-shot *Jet Dream* book.

The novel-length adventure was excellent; one of Gold Key's better books of that period. One cannot help but wonder just what heights the series could have soared to if it had had only a little more space or a regularly published book of it's own. It's all quite rhetorical since Jet is no doubt gone for good, but she will always have a place near and dear to this writer's heart.

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The Superhero Women by Stan Lee
Simon and Shuster, 1977

"I have been ever loyal to the United Sisterhood Alliance and to its creed - Sexuality! Solidarity! Superiority!" Yes, folks, you are listening to none other than Lyra the Femizon. What? You've never heard of her? Well, don't blush - she only appeared once, in what was actually **planned** to be a mere one-shot story in *Savage Tales* #1.

When I first heard that Stan Lee was planning to make *The Superhero Women* the next volume in the Marvel Origins series, I wondered how he expected to scrape together enough superheroines to fill a book. After all, Red Sonja and Ms. Marvel are the only solo heroines Marvel's ever had that weren't almost immediately cancelled.

Well, my fears were groundless - almost. Stan has managed to fill the book quite nicely, even including an epilogue lamenting that lack of space forced him to leave out the likes of Phoenix, Spider-Woman, Crystal, and so on. Although frankly, I don't know what possessed him to omit them and include long-cancelled characters like Shanna the She-Devil and curiosities like Hela and Lyra instead.

That said, I must admit that even the stories starring heroines I'd never heard of before were quite gripping. And the Medusa and Black Widow stories (actually guest shots in *Spider-Man*) are nothing less than masterpieces, I really wish he'd left Shanna out, though - she's heartless, ruthless, and a lot more bloodthirsty than Red Sonja ever was, and with a lot less reason.

Yes, on the whole, this book is definitely more than worth buying. The only real problem with it is Stan Lee. The gentleman doth protest too much. How does he have the nerve to lead off the book (and the Medusa story) with a sweeping statement like, "You will be able to see that Marvel never thought of females as second-class citizens," when farther on in the very same volume is a typical early Fantastic Four story that starts with the Invisible Girl saying, "You know, Reed, this measuring device to test my invisibility would make the kookiest hat!"? Later on, he clamis that the Wasp was his attempt to "let Ant-Man have a partner who'd be his equal in every way." But in the story that follows, she has to be coached through every step of the way on her first mission with Ant-Man, who constantly calls her "child", and nearly gets herself killed when she rashly disobeys his orders.

Don't get me wrong - I'm sure the mere idea of letting a heroine work with a male hero as a team was just as revolutionary as Stan claims it was at the time that he started doing it. But it's a bit much for him to claim that male chauvinism at Marvel was a mere memory even in the early days, when the stories themselves prove otherwise.

Oh, yes, there's one other problem. In introducing the origin story of The Cat - which is excellent - Stan reveals that he'd entirely forgotten about her until he started digging through the files for these superwomen stories. Well, since she was cancelled after four issues, I guess that's not too surprising. But then he says that he really liked The Cat when he rediscovered her, and:

"Sooner or later, when we get the time, I'll discuss the subject of Greer Nelson with Amiable Archie Goodwin, our Editor par excellence. And it's a pretty good bet that, if the right script and art team is available, you haven't seen the last of The Claws of The Cat!"

Incredibly, Stan seems to have no idea that The Cat in the form of Greer Nelson is no more, having been transformed into Tigra the Were-Woman. This despite the fact that Tigra is one of the heroines on his list of people-I-would-have-liked-to-include at the end of the book. I know the man is busy, but didn't he even show the manuscript to anyone who's more up on day-to-day affairs at Marvel before he sent it in?

Oh, well. As long as Stan can keep coming up with stories like these (most of which he also wrote), I guess I can forgive him anything - provided he promises to sit down and start putting together *Daughters of the Superhero Women.*

- Margaret O'Connell

Portia Prinz #2,3
(85¢ each from Richard Howell, 31½ Roberts Rd., #2, Cambridge, MA 02138)

Portia Prinz is a fan stripzine, fairly slick in appearance with two color wraparound covers and offset printing. It bills the title character as the world's **foremost** pseudo-intellectual superheroine. It's a self-created fantasy complete with a chronology, where women are immortal – at least in Portia's community. Kind of a variation on the Amazon theme. As a matter of fact, this race of women is called the Glamazons. (Does anyone remember Femizons?)

The art shows promise, although all the faces look the same – only the clothes and hair have changed.

As far as the script goes it reeks of M*A*S*H – one liners and snappy comebacks are abundant. It doesn't work for a zine which claims partiality to character development. Everyone seems to sound the same.

Major themes within the strip include role reversal, science vs. religion, and man (or woman) vs. the world. I think the books try to tackle too much in one bite. But the books also poke fun at everything, maybe even themselves. - Nick Chinn

Wonder Woman - *A Ms. Book*
Bonanza Books, 1972

This is a good collection of classic Wonder Woman strips from the 1940's in a large, colorful format. Comics fans will probably enjoy the reprints, but are unlikely to have use for Gloria Steinham's 6 page introduction and Phyllis Chesler's 14 page interpretive essay on psycho-socio-historical aspects of the legendary Amazons.

The book is essentially designed as a piece of feminist ideas, interpreting Wonder Woman as "a symbol of the feminist movement" and "an example for all women to follow." Even if you're more or less sympathetic to women's lib, it doesn't make the comics much more enjoyable.

The hardback edition of this book has been remaindered and is going out of print. It can now be purchased from many book outlets for the same price as the soft cover edition, and is an excellent value. - Nick Chinn

Index to Wonder Woman - *A Ms. Book*
by Randall W. Scott (see ad on this page)

A book is only as good as its index. Without this index, the *Wonder Woman* book is only a pretty collection of early Wonder Woman stories to be read, enjoyed, and then forgotten because there is no way to reference the parts you may want to refer back to.

Randy Scott has provided an invaluable service by providing this index. With a minor amount of trimming, this 9 page, 8½ x 11, xeroxed index (plus Amended Table of Contents) should accompany every volume of *Wonder Woman*.

This alphabetical index cover the main topics, people, and characters in both the reprinted stories and the accompanying essays. - Steve Johnson

Fiction Illustrated #2
Byron Preiss Visual Publications

Looking for something new in a heroine? I recommend **Starfawn.**

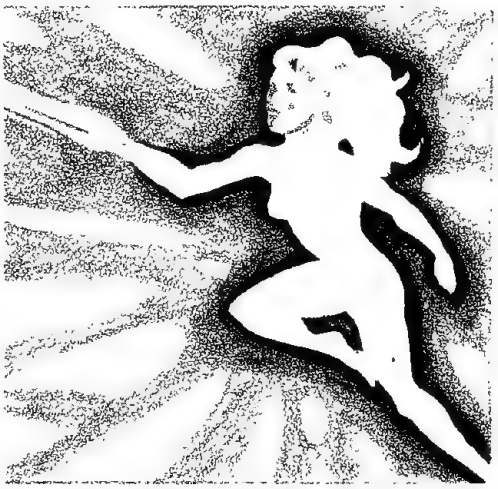
The book features extremely fine artwork by Steve Fabian, with excellent color by Marie Severin. The story is fairly decent, although somewhat of a cliche: A crew of space-persons are inspecting a spaceprobe which explodes on Shalla (Starfawn), giving her the power of light and sound. Somewhat of a story follows.

While I like the concept and love the art, I feel that the printing quality on the standard newsprint, and the small size (5" x 6 3/4") detract from the fine work of the artist. The prices is also quite steep. However, even if one cannot afford a dollar for the 104 pages of this book, I recommend at least giving it a look through.

The actual title of the book is not Starfawn, but *Fiction Illustrated* #2, and it may still be available at a local bookstore. If you can't find it, a copy can be ordered for (ouch!) $1.75 from: Pyramid Books - Fiction Illustrated, 9 Garden Street, Moonachie, NJ 07074.

(Heroine-lovers might also want to take note of The Comic Reader Super Summer Special *#133 which had a special 7 page comic strip feature. Called "Diamond Detective Agency", it centers around a pretty sleuth named Hanna Diamond. Write to Street Enterprises, P.O. Box 255, Menomonee Falls, WI 53051 with 50¢ for a copy, along with a letter of support to see Hanna back again.)*

- Tom Luth



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Randall W. Scott
515 Elizabeth Street
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Letters to

CHeFaC

Dear Steve,

Thanks for the copy of The Heroine Addict #11. **That's me!!** I'm addicted to Red Sonja, and was happy to see her on the cover of your splendid zine. I'll now proceed to peruse its contents.

The Sonja madness contines. Along with the strip, I'm tying in my showbiz background and have developed a wizard character - it's me!

And it's crazy! The media love Sonja. We've had three network shows, plus lotsa local stuff. More comin'. We've got the Wizard and Sonja show, done last time with 5 Sonjas! We've done it at cons and night clubs, and TV.

As you know Sonja was the first Marvel heroine to make it. Also the first comic character to have her own major convention, SonjaCon.

She outsells 'em all, including Wonder Woman, by a wide margin, and consistently. All this with original stories, not adaptions of R.E. Howard material, as with Conan. In fact, Sonja, at this point in her history, when compared to Conan, sells better! Conan was canceled early in the series.

Not Sonja.

Red Sonja #1 came in at 49.3; Spider-Man territory! Last issue she was only 2 points behind Howard the Duck, and did better than Nova!

A lot of important people in the industry think the potential of Sonja is enormous. It's going to be a biggee, Steve. She's taking off. And she's great. A great fantasy character.

All the progress, and not in the Marvel "House Style". Amazing. They let me do it all, my way, and it seems to work even though my stuff is not really good comic book art, like Kirby or Kane.

Say hello to Mercy Van Vlack. Haven't seen her at a con in awhile. Loved her greeting card drawings. And Bob Rodi. Gosh, I owe him a beer! And Jo Duffy for obvious reasons! Chris Padovano is practically a member of the family.

And my best to all the staff and gang!

Frank Thorne
1967 Grenville Rd.
Scotch Plains, NJ 07076

. Thanks for your comments, Frank, and we'll look forward to your special contribution in our special 13th issue of THS featuring Red Sonja. - SRJ

Dear Steven,

Thank you for your part in the decision to continue publishing THA and TA. It was probably a long decision on your part, and I sincerely hope everything works out.

Following what may be the most positive statement in this letter, allow a reader to offer a suggestion and a comment. I'd like to see a closing editorial by Al Tanner dealing with his exit from the CHFC/AHPA. From the wording and the style of type found in certain recent ads in TBG, I suspect I know what Al is doing to keep busy - the special order booklets plugged in THA must have caught on - but it would be interesting to hear the word from his typewriter. Therefore, if he is approachable, why not offer him a free guest editorial in THA.

The comment is something that is almost too mundane to bring up, but then I feel mundane tonight: If it is a matter of preference and not $, I think the publications would look better if they were not printed on slick glossy paper. This is only my opinion, and if the paper now in use is less expensive, keep using it.

Noting the comment that THA#11, page 31 contained about the finances, allow me to refund the 28¢ postage on my issue, which is inclosed. Also inclosed is an extremely short bid sheet - the second shortest one ever submitted by me. I just can't get in the mood.

Although you probably have a lot of other things to do, it might not be too off base to suggest that if you have any favorite network TV shows, drop a letter to your local station and the network on behalf of the shows. There is a current trend to use overnight ratings and dump shows as soon as possible, so a little support for any series won't hurt at all.

P.S. Thanks for putting "Forwarding & Return Postage Guaranteed" on the return address. The USPS will know someone cares, and they'll treat delivery better that way.

Stephen Borer
2135 Iglehart Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55104

The invitation has been extened to Al for a "farewell editorial" but as of this writing, the offer has not been responded to. Communication with Al has been slow, and even non-existent at times, so I too have to assume that he is keeping busy on his special order materials.

It should be noted that all of Al Tanner's publications come under the AHPA heading, and that The Comics Heroines Fan Club and The Adventure Heroines Publishing Association are **no longer** *associated in any way.*

The first rule in publishing a fanzine is do **not** *offend your printer. The printer wanted to use the glossy book stock, and since no one else even came close to his price, I'm not going to argue.*

Thank you for your generous bids in the art auction, and I trust that you will enjoy the art.

I'm sure that all our readers will take your suggestion on writing letters in support of our favorite TV shows.

And I would not have gone to the 3rd class mailing rate if I had not been sure that adequate steps would be taken by the Post Office to insure delivery to our readers. But to avoid problems, if you have a change of address, please let me know. - SRJ

Dear Mr. Johnson,

Because of your persuasive literature, and because I've just received money from home, I am no longer broke and have yielded to temptation. I would like to join your club! Accordingly, I've enclosed your check for $3.00, to begin my account. As an old Cat fan, I'd like to get a copy of The Heroine Addict #11. I can't wait to see that Cat cover!

P.S. Thanks for digging me up!

Deby Dann
Whitworth College
Box 291
Spokane, WA 99751

Welcome! - SRJ

Steve,

I realize that this is going to be a low blow, but what I'm going to say needs to be said: You and Ted blew it when you printed The Heroine Addict #11 and TA#5.

The Heroine Addict as a fanzine for heroine fans isn't in existence. The first ten issues were a joke and your eleventh issue did little to erase that image. The title should have left with Tanner/Turner. Changing the title now isn't enough - the concept of a fresh start without Al's presence is ruined... which means, too, you probably won't recover your money. ($1 for that thing is a ripoff!)

I have seen THA #11, Ken Gale had a copy. He still has it I think - nobody at Creation was interested in it. Sorry guys, but I hope Hola! comes out or I'm going to feel incredibly guilty.until I can find time to more than dream about - but it doesn't sell!

Impressions: DArt. The best fillos are here on the flyer. I feel like mumbling "deceptive advertising". Carol's two large pieces were nice, but entirely out of place. Carol is a feminist in the sense of what THA should be: a forum for discussion of femme heroes, past, present, and future. A springboard for discussion on improvements on the current comic heroines, with tangents including economic feasibility. And as an offering of encouragement to DC, Marvel, et al, to make changes and experiment. (DC's $ books offer great potential as the $ books won't sink or swim just because of a single strip.)

2) Carol's work, although perhaps a little too cynical (did she miss the fact that Sue Storm/Reed *(sic)* also knows many forms of martial arts?) was good. The remaining pieces didn't "suck the mop", but they sure came close - THA has a rep for reviews of

pabulum level content and not much else. *sheesh* I could go on for pages (and did in a LoC) on why Ms. Marvel is not a symbol of women's liberation movement, but, rather analogous to... where that book is hitting snags, which should have been avoided, and predictions for the book; how why Wonder Woman stinks (although I think Carol could do a better job); how Lois Lane could become a worthwhile strip? what's being done right; and lastly (?) why we won't see alot of this change/improvements taking place in the industry. THA, right now, is so wishy washy. You guys like everything.

I don't.

Typesetting looks good, but I buy for reading material in 'zines, not art.

Do a decent turn around - and I'd be interested. I'm not right now.

Valeria Beasley
1 Deer Run Dr.
Wilmington, DE 19807

Nothing like a fiery letter to warm up a lettercolumn!

My feelings on the former title of this publication were expressed to Al Tanner long before he considered giving up publishing. One of the first things that I discussed with Ted was changing the title, but #11 and the cover were pretty well laid out or in the works, so I let the matter slide while I solicited comments from the staff.

I got comments from one staff member, and later a belated vote of confidence from a second staff member.

THA #11 was not as polished as I would have liked, but considering the problems and limitations of getting the issue out at the time, it was adequate. It was a transition issue, but almost as if we were starting from scratch. THA #1 was certainly no gem, but it takes time getting things rolling. Ask Mike Flynn about The Legion Outpost #1 and watch him cringe!

As for the cost of THA #11, printing, postage, and mailing envelope totaled 92¢ per copy. The remaining 8¢ doesn't go very far in covering other publishing costs. The $1 price tag is down from the $1.10 Al was up to, but I hope to increase the press run and decrease the cost per copy on this issue.

THA must be doing something right though. Its track record speaks for itself. Many fanzines are still-born, and most don't last beyond 2 or 3 issues. Twelve issues to date is far above the norm.

I feel that Mercy did an exceptionally fine job of laying out our ad/flyer. It's true that a couple of the more visually impressive, action type illos were used on the ad, but it is certainly a gross slight to overlook the less dramatic, by still fine illos by Anderson, Smith, Mercy, and Heller/McLaughlin. Doesn't one always put their "best foot forward" though?

THA #11 was mostly factual articles as opposed to columns of opinion and discussion. There is certainly room for this type of material, and THS is the place to put it. I strongly feel that it would be to the detriment of **yourself** *and THS if we can't get you to contribute such a regular column in future issues. I personally tend not to be very opiniated (that's why I stick to writing factual articles like GAG), though I always enjoy good, intelligent opinion.*

Your are going to have to do better than just commenting on Carol's pieces though, and claim the rest of the book was "wishy washy". That's a copout for the lack of good, constructive criticism. But that also means you'll probably have to buy or borrow the issue to do an intelligent job.

I sincerely expect this zine to take off in new directions, and feel this issue will be a quantum jump over the last.

Typesetting is art? I'm flattered! - SRJ

Dear Steven,

"Who on earth is sending me mail from California?" I said when I received your letter. Concluding that it must be the first of the barrage of missives from fellow fans that supposedly descends upon anyone who has ever had a letter printed in a comics lettercol (I think my last one was in Green Lantern/Green Arrow #98), I opened it - and discovered it was even better.

I'm certainly glad to hear that the Comics Heroines Fan Club is still alive. My letter of inquiry had gone unanswered so long that I figured Albert Tanner had left the country, taking all the club's mail with him, or you had a rigid policy of not answering anything that didn't come complete with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. (I forgot to include one and suffered agonies when I looked at the Overstreet Price Guide again and discovered it was "common courtesy" to do so.)

Anyway, I really appreciated your letter

(a personal reply, yet!), and here's my three dollars membership fee to prove it. I would also like the following back issues: The Heroine Addict #1-11 and The Adventuress #1-5. A sepearate check for sixteen dollars is inclosed.

By the way, you may be interested to know that when my letter criticizing Rona Blabbit's casual dismissal of Red Sonja as just "a killer" appeared in The Comic Reader #149, I got a letter of thanks from Frank Thorne(!) a couple of days later. Among other things, he said, "So many attack this great character without even trying to grasp what the theater is wherein she plays. . . The letter is excellent and I will cite portions of it as riposte in the growing controversy over Sonja's ascent to her proper place in the myths of our time." (I'm really not trying to impress you with my importance - it just seemed stupid not to mention it at all. When I started to read the letter and realized who it was from, the whole thing seemed so incredible that I just sat there and laughed hysterically for ten minutes.)

How do you like the Huntress? I think she looks very promising, even though she hasn't done much yet. I'm awaiting the next issue of All-Star Comics with bated breath.

Margaret O'Connell
600 W. 116th St.
Apt. #24-1
New York, NY 10027

Not only has Margaret joined the Club, she is also now on the staff. She will be conducting an interview with Frank Thorne beginning this issue, and promises other work for us in the near future.

The inclusion of an SASE will always speed up any correspondence that you send my way, when a personal response is required.

I personally look forward to the directions that the Huntress may take. - SRJ

Dear Steven,

I agree that it's best to get THA and TA back onto a regular schedule before starting any ambitious projects like calenders. TA #5 was an excellent issue; I only wish Jeff and Tom would conclude this particular Skull Goddess story. It's bad enough to have interminable serials in Marvel comics, where at least the chapters are only a month apart: these are so far apart that I have to go back a and reread earlier chapters before I can make any sense out of them! At least Mike Flynn finally wrapped up "The Ytterbium Trail": it's time Jeff did the same.

The Stella vs. Raven strip was by far the best; a lighthearted fling with a few cutting jabs at some of the pros. Unfortunately, the fan art of Bob and Ted still isn't pro quality (of course, neither is much of today's "pro" work, but that's neither here nor there) - - the figures vary so much! On the first page, for example, Bev looks about 16 in the second panel, and more like 40 in the third - - surely it didn't take her that long to register, did it?

Rich Morrissey
55 Claudette Circle
Framingham, MA 01701

Steve:

Hi there!

Uh... thanx for the reminder that my CHFC dues are due, but until I get this little matter with a record club cleared up and the gift buying season here, I'm afraid I won't be able to rejoin - not just yet, anyway.

Please save me copies of all the other AHPA zines.

P.S. I loved your Moon Girl article!

Chuck Alligood
175 Bronwyn St.
Southern Pines, SC 28387

Alright here! I think that I am being buttered up! But for the immediate future there should be no shortage of recent issues.

The same can not be said for older issues though! THA #4 is now sold out, and THA #1 and other issues may follow soon, so order now! - SRJ

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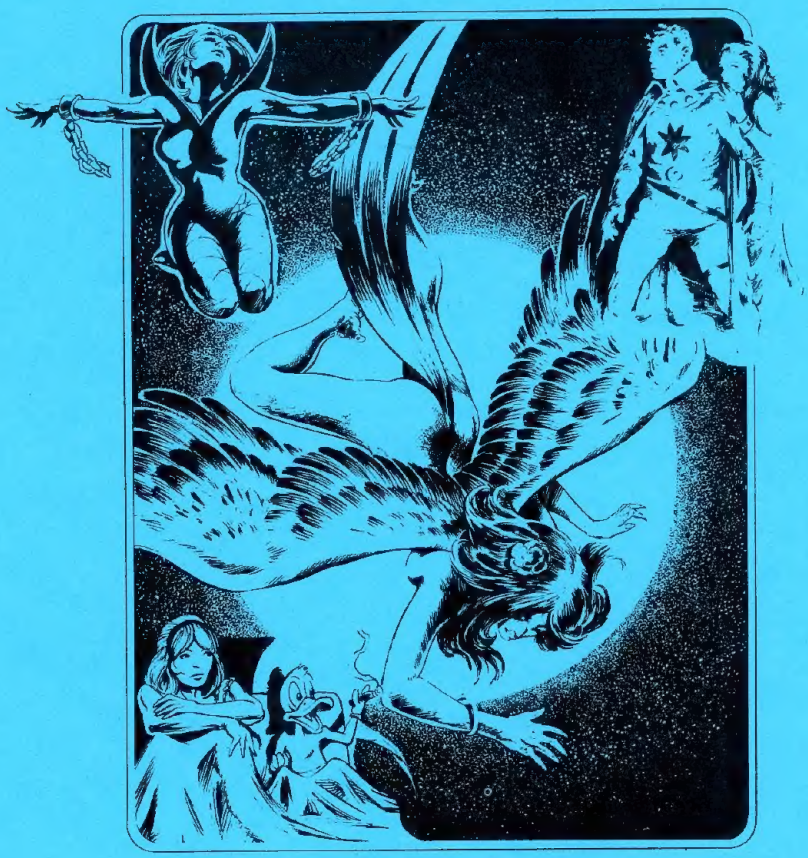

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